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Time and Measures of Success: Interpreting and Implementing *Laudato Si'*¹

i. Why Seek A 'Refined Understanding of Time'?

Pope Francis' encyclical letter *Laudato Si': On Care For Our Common Home* presents a formidable invitation to humanity. The challenge is to undertake '*a bold cultural revolution*' (114). Central to this revolution is a specific task: to '*redefine our notion of progress*' (194).

The concept of 'progress' unites the notions of 'time' and 'success'. 'Progress' is *change through time towards a defined goal*. Importantly, 'progress' is a 'vector' term. It specifies a direction of travel.

Organisations which seek to 'advance' or 'develop' communities and peoples, commonly referred to as 'development organisations', are always working with a definite notion of 'progress' even where it is not made explicit, insofar as they *frame and pursue specific kinds of change through time*. Even where the term 'progress' is avoided, other vector terms such as 'advance', 'develop' or 'improve' are invoked. This reflects the unavoidable condition of our activity: it occurs *for a goal, within time*. By framing a direction of travel through time, our employment of vector terms always presupposes some prior notion of what time is 'for'. Conceptions of what constitutes time's purpose or meaning are particularly assumed in the way that 'success' is measured: the movement towards or away from an end that is considered to be worthwhile.

Laudato Si' contains a prophetic vision of *what time is and is for*. This vision is at a striking angle to our civilizational habits and assumptions. It therefore challenges development organisations to think critically about the way they conceive 'progress', the way they measure their 'success'. In doing so, it invites them—more fundamentally—to ask how they express in their activity a particular conception of the meaning of time.

Seeking an authentic understanding of time is therefore not 'theoretical' in the remote or abstract sense, but intensely practical. Our conception of *what time is and is for* governs our actions. In articulating a particular vision of time, Pope Francis asks us to rethink the goals and directions of our activity, a challenge with concrete implications for how we measure 'success'.

This paper explores how *Laudato Si'* proposes a particular vision of time, which underpins its contrast between true and false notions of progress. This can form the foundation for the formulation of authentic 'measures of success'.

¹ This article is a report commissioned in January 2018 by the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) for its internal use discerning an authentic interpretation and implementation of *Laudato Si'* as a development organisation. The author is grateful for their permission to publish it here.

ii. Theological Framework

Laudato Si''s understanding of 'what time is and is for' is governed by three foundational truths. God is a 'Trinity', a *communion of persons*; this Triune God *freely creates* all that is; and God acts *in history*, which is to say, *in time*. Pope Francis speaks from these truths and explores how they illuminate our world and our responsibilities in that world.

1. **The Trinity: God is communion.** God is in himself relationship: a 'wondrous community of infinite love' (246).² This 'wondrous community' is the ground of being, and so communion is the deep structure of reality. God's Triunity allows us to see that creation is oriented towards relationship as its source and end. This comes to the fore in one of *Laudato Si'*'s most repeated refrains: 'Everything is connected' (239-40).
2. **Creation: God creates out of love.** The Triune God creates, not out of necessity, but freely. Love alone is the reason for the world's existence. 'Creation' is a gratuitous donation of being. Before all else, therefore, the world is *gift*. Matter and time itself are to be understood as gifts, not absolute possessions.
3. **History: God acts in time.** God is, in himself, eternal and not subject to time. But God acts in time to save his people. The field of God's salvific action is *history*. 'God saves us in time, not in a moment.'³ History, the unfolding stories of persons and communities, is the arena of salvation. Francis says, 'Time is God's messenger' (EG 171). It is the way he comes to us. In the flesh of Jesus Christ, God *enters time*.

iii. Does Time Have A Direction?

We have observed that 'progress' is a vector term. It denotes *moving forward in relation to a defined goal*. It trades on the idea that we can distinguish changes through time that are *toward* or *away from*. The key question, then, is 'Which way is forward?' Or, 'How do we distinguish changes that are 'toward' or 'away from'?'

Pope Francis analyses our present ecological and social crises precisely in these terms. 'We fail to see the deepest roots of our present failures, which have to do with *the direction, [the] goals ... of technological and economic growth*' (109). This is the thrust of his summons to seek 'another type of progress' (112). 'Redefining our notion of progress' (194) requires us to ask where we are going. Otherwise we cannot know when changes are 'progress' versus 'regress', or simply a futile stasis.

² All references from here are to *Laudato Si'* unless otherwise indicated. Abbreviations are: EG - *Evangelii Gaudium*; AL – *Amoris Laetitia*; GE – *Gaudete et Exsultate*.

³ Homily, 17th April 2015.

Laudato Si' has been framed as an anti-growth and anti-progress encyclical. One commentator describes it as the most anti-modern encyclical since the *Syllabus of Errors*.⁴ Some in development studies think that Pope Francis is wholly rejecting notions of progress, growth, development, and other vector terms. One describes *Laudato Si'* as wholly lacking 'the arrow of time' which traditionally dominates development discourse.⁵

The analysis presented in this paper questions these perceptions of Francis' vision. It is true that he is critical of certain directions of travel, and certain ways of understanding change through time. These are explored below. But he does not reject 'the arrow of time'. Exactly to the contrary. It is *because* time is inherently oriented toward an end that Francis is able to mount the critique he undertakes. It is the basis of his call for a transformed relationship to time, and therefore the kinds of 'success' we should be seeking.

If *Laudato Si'* wholly rejected 'the arrow of time', it would be offering a kind of bland presentism, as though there was nowhere to go. This quietistic return to an absolute present is nowhere to be found in Pope Francis' teaching. We find its opposite: an energetic dynamic of hope and expectation, a prophetic demand for change, a repeated use of journey metaphors, and over it all, the constant reference to the longed-for end of our journeying, the horizon which casts all our presents in diachronic perspective.

iv. A Theological Teleology of Creation

Laudato Si' calls for 'ecological conversion'. The word 'conversion' refers literally to a change of direction. A proclamation of repentance is at the heart of *Laudato Si'*. It is a prophetic critique, which brings judgement. We have been travelling the wrong way, and need to 'change course' (202). There is a norm for our journey, a correct direction; by this norm true 'development', true 'progress', can be discerned. It is this true path that Francis points out in *Laudato Si'*.

In fact, what we have called 'vector terms' pepper *Laudato Si'*. Language of 'towards', 'direction', 'journey', and 'end' show how the text is driven by a theological teleology. Creation's *end* is God, and the movement of creatures is towards or away from their end in God. We are all '*moving forward... towards a common point of arrival, which is God*' (83). 'In union with all creatures, we *journey through this land* seeking God... Let us sing *as we go*' (244). One of Francis' most repeated pastoral images is a journey metaphor: Jesus Christ '*accompanies us on the journey of life*' (235; cf. EG 12, 71, AL 62).

⁴ R. R. Reno, 'The Return of Catholic Anti-Modernism', *First Things* 18th June 2015. Reno describes *Laudato Si'* as 'anti-progressive'. On the account we are giving here, however, this is an over-simple analysis. Rather, Francis is rejecting a certain conception of what constitutes progress.

⁵ Wolfgang Sachs, 'The Sustainable Development Goals and *Laudato si'*: varieties of Post-Development?', *Third World Quarterly* (2017), 8. '[T]he chronopolitics of development are conspicuously absent from the encyclical... Progress, and other promises for the future, are non-existent in the document and one gets the impression that the arrow of time that has shaped historical perception for two centuries has simply been done away with... in *Laudato Si'* the rejection of the arrow of time is... extreme.' Puzzlingly, Sachs describes the encyclical as 'decidedly space focused'; it 'replaces the arrow of time with spatial consciousness'. This analysis is disputed in the present paper.

Commentators frequently try to isolate the textual lynchpin or organising idea of *Laudato Si'*. But I have not seen it noted that the Encyclical's subject, *our common home*, is in the text inherently a teleological term in the ways I have indicated: this earth and its creatures are *towards* something. It is a basic hermeneutical principle to read a text through the title its author specifies: *On Care For Our Common Home*. Applying this principle brings to light a number of ways in which *Laudato Si'* significantly develops the Catholic Social Teaching tradition by expanding the meaning and scope of the word 'common'. Of particular significance to our discussion here, however, is the way it reframes its eponymous subject eschatologically—a bold move in a document which seeks traction with people of all faiths and none. 'Even now we are *journeying towards* the sabbath of eternity, the new Jerusalem, *towards our common home in heaven*' (243). In taking this approach, Francis is simply applying to new contexts a traditional insight of Christian philosophy. God, the true end, is the benchmark of all change, all motion. God is the *telos* of creatures. Their 'motion', which is simply change through time, is oriented only with reference to that final cause.⁶ 'Creatures tend towards God' (240).

This eschatological purchase of the phrase, *our common home*, is a hermeneutic key. Creation is a vectored reality. We must 'direct our gaze to the end of time' (100), for the cosmos is '*journeying toward* an ultimate perfection' (80, n. 49). The Risen One is '*directing [creatures] toward fullness as their end*' (100). This 'fullness' is creation's 'ultimate destiny' (83). This identification of a purpose and a goal beyond the horizons of history generates a different experience of time for Christians. They literally 'live in different times'.⁷

It is not the case, therefore, that there is no 'arrow of time' in *Laudato Si'*. The prophetic force of the text derives from its contrast between the direction indicated by the true arrow of time, written into creation's very being, and the path indicated by the false arrow of time generated by the superficial 'technocratic paradigm', which contradicts creation's deepest nature.⁸ There is a true and false direction of travel, because there is a clearly identified goal, even though that goal is beyond history. In the final analysis, 'progress' is defined in terms of the goal which is God.⁹ The communion which is God, creation's source and goal, is the foundation of integral ecology as a development practice.¹⁰

⁶ Cf. Simon Oliver, 'Augustine on Creation, Providence and Motion', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 18.4 (2016): 379-98.

⁷ Clare Monagle, 'The politics of extra/ordinary time: Encyclical thinking', *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 4 (2017), 9.

⁸ The Catholic Social Teaching tradition takes the perspective of eternity as enabling the highest affirmation of the temporal. The neglect of an eternal perspective, represented by the false arrow of technocratic time, does not elevate the temporal but actively undermines its goods.

⁹ A goal which lies outside time casts modern narratives of progress, which identify absolute purposes within history, in critical light. This 'transcendent futurity orients a politics outside of what we call 'modernity'' (Clare Monagle, op. cit., 8). Monagle points out some of the practical difficulties this may cause; she worries that 'it does not lend itself to an inclusive and negotiated political'. *Laudato Si'*'s call for dialogue and multilateral participation in responding to the ecological crisis represents tells against this charge.

¹⁰ 'The only known model that integrates all aspects of the complex entity that is integral human development is the Holy Trinity. Following the vocation described by Catholic anthropology and social teaching therefore means emulating Trinitarian relations in individual and social lives.' Wolfgang Grassl, 'Integral Human Development in Analytical Perspective: A Trinitarian Model', *Journal of Markets and Morality* 16.1 (2013): 135-55.

Accordingly, 'progress' is not an exclusively critical or negative term in *Laudato Si'*. Francis uses the term positively to describe a movement undertaken in the right direction, a journey which is rightly oriented, i.e. which is *towards* the true end.¹¹ The text presents 'a call to seek other ways of understanding... progress' (16). It proclaims 'the urgent need for us *to move forward* in a bold cultural revolution' (113).

To sum up: 'Progress', the concept of success in time, is validated *as governed by a theological teleology of creation*.

Crucially, however, this true progress is conceived in terms of *grace* and *the free response to grace*, not in terms of independent human achievement (78; 83; 100; 205; 221). Indeed, the 'ecological conversion' for which Pope Francis calls is a response to 'the words of love' (225) which fill creation, which find their consummation in Jesus Christ. Discovering the presence of God's Spirit in every creature draws us to cultivate 'the ecological virtues' (88). Ecological conversion and ecological virtue are our free response to the wondrous discovery of what the world is: not just 'nature' but 'creation'; a gift from the Father, redeemed by Jesus Christ and indwelt by the Spirit of life.

The following sections discuss what an authentic relationship to time involves, the ways our cultural habits make it difficult for us to cultivate this, and what we can do about it.

v. An Authentic Relationship To 'Time'

In the Catholic tradition, God, whose being is *pure act* and from whom all existence springs, is not subject to time.¹² Time is an aspect of God's creation. This is crucial, for it establishes time *as gift*, not *as given*. The latter would refer to something that is just inertly there, a datum whose origin is inscrutable, a bare fact with no story. A *gift*, in contrast, expresses the dynamic of a relationship. It does not leave its origin behind, but always evokes that for which it stands, that which it intrinsically expresses: the one who gives, and the relationship that one wishes to establish with the one who receives. The giver is intimately present in the gift.

Francis critiques those cultural patterns and habits in which we relate to time as an absolute possession for our unaccountable consumption. Time, being an aspect of creation, is not an absolute possession. It is a free gift of love from the source of all, a gift for whose use we are answerable. The appropriate response to this gift is joy, wonder, and responsibility.

In outlining Francis' conception of an authentic relationship to time, a number of themes are prominent, which this section treats in turn: the contrast between time and space; dialectical thinking; and the critique of a consumerist attitude to time.

a) Time Is Greater Than Space

¹¹ For example, the media need to become 'sources of *new cultural progress*' (47).

¹² This is classically formulated in the doctrine of divine impassibility. A well-known recent defence is Thomas Weindandy, *Does God Suffer?* (Indiana: UNDP, 2000).

The first encyclical letter of Francis' pontificate, *Lumen Fidei*, was largely written by Pope Benedict. Francis added only 'a few contributions of my own' (LF 7). It is notable, then, that among these was his now well-known maxim, 'Time is greater than space'.¹³ This gives some indication of its importance in his pontificate. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, the term is listed as the first of his four governing principles, and is repeated in *Laudato Si'* and *Amoris Laetitia*.¹⁴

Francis explains that this maxim means that we should 'initiate processes' rather than attempting to 'dominate spaces'.¹⁵ Too often 'space and power are preferred to time and processes'. The former corresponds to self-assertion and possession. The latter corresponds to working 'slowly', 'patiently', 'engaging' with others, seeing ourselves and our actions as 'links in constantly expanding chain'. Trusting that these partnerships will 'bear fruit in significant historical events', we realise that do not have to 'keep everything madly together in the present'. We try not to be 'obsessed with immediate results'. Surrendering the lust for a unilateral possession of the space of action, we can endure difficulties, adversities and unexpected obstacles 'without anxiety'. Partnering with others in a journey over which we do not seek to have total control, we focus on beginning processes of positive change.

In a personal interview, Francis explains the principle in more fully theological terms. 'God manifests himself in historical revelation, in time. Time initiates processes, and space crystallizes them. God is in time, in the processes. We must not focus on occupying the spaces where power is exercised, but rather on starting long-run historical processes... God manifests himself in time and is present in the processes of history. This gives priority to actions that give birth to new historical dynamics. And it requires patience, waiting.'¹⁶

In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis vividly illustrates the principle by applying it to contested pastoral questions, urging patience and accompaniment rather than judgement and resolution. He makes clear that the priority of time follows from our understanding of who God is and how he is with us. Specifically, it is a pneumatological principle. We do not need to 'settle' things now, for that would deny primacy to the Holy Spirit, who 'guides us towards the entire truth (cf. Jn 16:13)'. It is the Spirit who 'leads us fully into the mystery of Christ and enables us to see all things as he does' (AL 3). Giving priority to time means trusting in 'God's timetable', recognising that discernment takes time; it is not instant, but dialogical, with God and others (GE 169).

Giving priority to time does not mean sacrificing the 'clear convictions' and 'tenacity' needed to create change. Rather, we become more effective agents of change, for change cannot occur in pure space, but only in time. Time is the very condition of growth. It is the medium of salvation. 'Give time to time' is 'wise advice... because time is God's messenger. God saves

¹³ This rather enigmatic phrase appears for the first time at LF 57. It appears again in EG 222-5, LS 178 and AL 3 and 261. The maxim has attracted controversy, and among Francis' critics, a certain amount of derision (e.g. Sandro Magister, <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1351301bdc4.html?eng=y>, accessed 16th May 2018). Massimo Borghesi, *Una Biografia Intellettuale*, presents a concerted answer to the criticisms, by showing how the maxim is rooted in Pope Francis intellectual commitments. This is briefly considered in Section v. b) below.

¹⁴ Pope Francis says that the principle is derived from 'the pillars of the Church's social doctrine' (EG 221).

¹⁵ Quotations in this paragraph are from EG 223.

¹⁶ 'A Big Heart Open to God', interview given to Antonio Spadaro, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 19th September 2013.

us in time, not in the moment.¹⁷ God works in history and does not wave ‘a magic wand’ to make everything happen instantly. Knowing this saves us from the ‘triumphalism’ in which we try to grasp success and completion all at once.¹⁸

To further illustrate the maxim, which remains somewhat abstract, the following metaphor may be helpful.

To prioritise *space* is to be *cartographical*. It is to presume a bird’s eye view. A map affords a synchronic vision, in which we know the shape of things from above and can control, conceptually, the whole path of our journey from A to B. It allows us to command the landscape and the route.

To prioritise *time* is to proceed from a ground-level view, the view of one on a path, who searches for the way ahead from within the landscape without presuming to a view from above. She knows her destination but does not claim a bird’s eye view of the whole. She is a ‘journeyman’, whose experience is that of a process, a diachronic discovery undertaken through time.

Biblically, those who prioritise time can be compared to the pilgrim people of God, who take an uncertain path through the wilderness, following mysterious signs. They falter, but what counts is their faithfulness to the promise through time. They trust in the process that has begun, sweeping them up in an unfolding story of which God is the ultimate author. They know they are journeying towards the land of promise, and that they do so as a response to the divine initiative of liberation. But they don’t know how they will get there, or how long it will take. They learn to walk together, day by day.

Those who prioritise space are the builders of the tower of Babel, trying to get up high to see everything all at once from above. They try to dominate space by seeking an elevated, static view. The initiative is their own. They prefer the security of static power and total vision to the dynamic of learning, growing and trusting.

b) Dialectical Thinking: Faithfulness Through Time

This first of the four governing principles of Francis’ pastoral theology expresses his *dialectical thinking*.

Francis’ dialectics is in contrast with the classic Hegelian formulation. In the latter, ‘thesis’ and ‘antithesis’ engage in a conflictual and antagonistic manner. Eventually a third position, or synthesis, emerges in history. Francis’ dialectic is derived from critiques of Hegel in which

¹⁷ Homily 12th April, 2013. The phrase ‘Time is God’s messenger’ originates with Peter Faber. One of Francis’ first acts as Pope was to canonise Faber, whom he recognises as a role model for his own ministry.

¹⁸ ‘The Lord saves us in history... [he] does not work as a fairy with a magic wand.’ ‘Triumphalism’ is ‘a great temptation in Christian life to which not even the Apostles were immune’. ‘Triumphalism is not of the Lord’, who ‘teaches us that in life everything is not magic’ (Homily 12th April, 2013).

apparent polarities achieve a genuine reconciliation on a higher or transcendent plane.¹⁹ The Church is the *coincidentia oppositorum*, in which the Holy Spirit sustains seeming opposites in a dynamic and creative tension, forging them into a transcendent synthesis which loses nothing of their diversity.

This is a characteristically Ignatian outlook in which grace and freedom, action and contemplation, world and not-of-this-world, refer to two different but wholly coincident planes. These planes are united by faithful human action. They find their ultimate union in the person of Jesus Christ, in whom the ultimate poles—the created and the uncreated—are one single personal subject.

Francis' Catholic dialectic is expressed concretely in a basic posture of trust. We trust in the reconciliation of tensions and contraries in God's future. We are to 'live in that incarnational tension, rather than trying to "resolve" the tension by opting for one pole over the other'.²⁰ We can only respect this incarnational tension by accepting the tension inherent in being *creatures in time*: 'the tension between fullness and limitation' (EG 222). For 'we are neither eternal nor ephemeral: we are men and women on a journey in time, time that begins, and time that ends.'²¹

This dovetails with the eschatological perspective on time which Francis adopts in *Laudato Si'*. We do not foreclose on history because God has not foreclosed on it, but draws us continually on, towards a horizon of fullness. To deny priority to time is a kind of idolatry, for it seeks to establish in creaturehood a false completeness, a premature closure. We must resist 'the illusion of the moment'. Instead we are to say, 'I am on a journey and I have to look forward.'²² It is history, the history of God's ways with his people, which joins our moments into a continuous story, a meaningful narrative.

This Catholic dialectic illuminates the intellectual substrate of Francis' pastoral values as *faithfulness through time*. We are to *stay with* concrete human realities, complex pastoral situations. We resist the urge to premature resolution. We seek to *listen*, to *accompany*, to *walk with*. We seek beginnings, openings, the initiation of processes, rather than enumerating achievements and listing outcomes. We resist the temptation always to *explain*, to *resolve*, to *conclude*, to *control*.

'Progress', therefore, is not something we grasp in an act of power. We live towards God's future, understanding that true progress is attained only by *patient faithfulness through time*—faithfulness to persons, communities, and God. True 'growth' cannot be seized or

¹⁹ Romano Guardini, *Der Gegensatz*, was a key influence and the subject of Francis' uncompleted doctoral dissertation. In the background are Adam Mohler, Maurice Blondel, Henri de Lubac and Erich Przywara.

²⁰ Massimo Borghesi, *Una Biografia Intellettuale*, is the first systematic treatment of Francis' 'dialectical thinking'. An English translation is yet to be released. My account here relies on the helpful treatment in Joseph S. Flipper, 'The Time of Encounter in the Political Theology of Pope Francis', in John C. Cavadini and Donald Wallenfang, eds., *Pope Francis and the Event of Encounter* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2018): 201-226, and more briefly Austen Ivereigh's review of the Italian text; 18th November 2017, <https://cruxnow.com/book-review/2017/11/18/new-book-looks-intellectual-history-francis-pope-polarity/> (accessed 16th May 2018).

²¹ Homily, 1st February 2018.

²² Homily, 1st February 2018.

manufactured, but unfolds multilaterally, relationally and organically. This explains Francis' relentless emphasis on *process* over *outcome*.²³ It does not mean that we let go of the desire for change. On the contrary; it means that, resisting the temptation of falsely immediate solutions, we catalyse chains of events that will 'expand', 'with no possibility of return' (EG 223), thus bringing about true and lasting change. With this attitude, we cannot be unilateral actors, but must engage others, surrendering personal or institutional control of our projects to communal processes which will 'bear fruit' in time.

To be faithful through time is to prioritise relationship; relationships which are open-ended, and which are characterised by a commitment to mutual presence, a presence which is not sought for utilitarian purposes, but just for its own sake. It is rooted in a wonder at the luminous reality of another person. Rather than seeking to know everything 'now', we learn that true knowing and learning is dialogical. It requires patience, trust, and humility before the unfolding stories of persons and situations. Prioritising relationship expresses the fundamental purpose and orientation of time, which is toward communion. We are given time in order that we may freely move toward others and toward God (239). This too is a pneumatological reality, for the Holy Spirit is communion; 'he is God's love'.²⁴

c) Questioning 'The Technocratic Paradigm'

The *technocratic paradigm* refers to a distinctively modern culture of control and utilitarian manipulation of the world.²⁵ It is closely connected to the 'distorted anthropocentrism' which sees the world as revolving around human need, desire and preference alone (69). The internal logic of the technocratic paradigm is power: the power to shape the world at will, a will which is accountable to no-one. 'Creation' is seen simply as an object for our use. This generates a particular attitude to time itself, in which 'human relations are regulated by two modern 'dogmas': efficiency and pragmatism'.²⁶ The gratuity of creation is forgotten, along with relationship as an intrinsic good, not simply a means to practical ends.

As an aspect of creation, time becomes subject to the logic of the technocratic paradigm. This is expressed in the general supposition that scientific and technological development constitute 'progress'. But 'scientific and technological progress cannot be equated with the progress of humanity and history' (113). We have an acquisitive and utilitarian relationship to time, expressed in short-term goal-setting and a rapacious desire to see 'results'. Just as

²³ Bonaventure may be a background influence here. Bonaventure's theology of history frames Christ *in the midst* of history, in contrast to Augustine, who frames Christ *at the end* of history.

²⁴ Catechesis, 4th December 2014.

²⁵ In articulating the technocratic paradigm, Romano Guardini is a key source for Pope Francis. Francis explains: 'This paradigm exalts the concept of a subject who, using logical and rational procedures, progressively approaches and gains control over an external object. This subject makes every effort to establish the scientific and experimental method, which in itself is already a technique of possession, mastery and transformation. It is as if the subject were to find itself in the presence of something formless, completely open to manipulation' (106).

²⁶ Homily, World Youth Day, 27th July 2013. Pope Francis' critique of the technocratic paradigm demonstrates how time is always storied—our experience of it is never neutral, but is always narrated in one way or another. Efficiency and pragmatism are one such story. These stories call for unpacking, an unpacking which will always be theological, for time can only be known by implicit contrast to non-time.

we instrumentalise material creation, time too becomes an object to be used and controlled. Our attitude to time, our culturally embedded ways of experiencing time, become the same as our attitude towards the earth itself: 'masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters' (11). Another of development is needed: development in human values and responsibility (78), requiring a radical reappraisal of our attitude to time itself.

The consumerist approach to time is captured by Pope Francis with the term '*rapidification*': an 'intensified pace of life and work' characterising modernity (18). Caught up in 'the feverish pursuit' of things, we rush headlong through time, and so lose that contemplative dimension which allows us to receive creation as a gift to be celebrated. Amidst 'a constant flood of new products', we experience 'a tedious monotony'. We become victims of 'constant noise, interminable and nerve-wracking distractions' (25). We sense 'a profound imbalance' which drives us 'to frenetic activity'; 'in a constant hurry', we end up 'riding rough-shod' over everything around us (25). 'The feverish demands of a consumer society leave us impoverished and unsatisfied' (GE 108). Fleeing that deeper encounter with others and with creation that might question or expose us (GE 29), we submerge ourselves in a flood of 'globalized technology', becoming addicted to 'the accumulation of constant novelties' (113). We are no longer able to hear 'the words of love' which fill creation; we become unable to discover the Creator's presence, and struggle to be really present to others.

The grave dangers of rapidification receive prominent treatment in Pope Francis' most recent teaching, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, which warns against the effects of 'constantly new gadgets, the excitement of travel and an endless array of consumer goods... We are overwhelmed by words, by superficial pleasures and by an increasing din, filled not by joy but rather by the discontent of those whose lives have lost meaning. How can we fail to realize the need to stop this rat race and to recover the personal space needed to carry on a heartfelt dialogue with God?' (GE 29).

Nevertheless, 'rapidification' seems to be something over which we have no control. We feel compelled to surrender to a condition of fragmentation and restlessness, as though the speed and direction of technological change cannot be stopped or diverted. This is ironic, insofar as it is in the name of greater control that technological changes are often adopted. Numbed by the pace and the overstimulation of new technological possibilities, we are pulled relentlessly 'in one direction', unable to see that 'a better future lies elsewhere' (113).

The three considerations proposed in this section indicate that questioning our habitual attitudes to time, and our ways of experiencing of time, are key dimensions of retrieving an authentic conception of progress. The refusal of time, the attempt to keep everything together in the present, is an expression of the same spirit of technocratic control that leads to frenetic activity at the cost of contemplative availability to others and to creation. Growth and progress are then related to as acts of power, and are marked by anxiety and haste, rather than acts of hope, marked by openness and patience.

vi. The Contemplative Dimension: Time As Gift

The civilizational transformation Francis calls for requires a transformation in our relationship to the time we are given. We must 'refuse to resign ourselves' to the impoverished quality of life induced by our acquisitive and utilitarian habits. Time is not an object for us to possess and use indiscriminately, as though it had no direction or meaning, as though it was not 'for' anything. We must 'continue to wonder about the purpose and meaning of everything' (113). In this wondering, and the 'serene attentiveness' which fosters it, we become able to see creation as an invitation to a love that transcends the world.

To understand the changes we are invited to make, we need to put this question to ourselves: what is 'the purpose and meaning of everything'? The end of creation is God, and God is communion. Rather than seeing time as oriented only toward certain proximate ends, we can learn to 'live in different times'; to experience time in ultimate perspective, as oriented towards communion. The very grain of the world is ordered to relationship. 'Creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion' (56).

Time, then, is properly to be *received*, with thanksgiving and wonder, for it is part of 'God's original gift of all that is' (5). It is the medium in which we hear and respond to God's invitation to us to join in his own life, a response which finds expression in the cultivation of loving communion with others and with the earth itself. Francis quotes Bonaventure: '*each creature bears in itself a specifically Trinitarian structure*' (239); each one is made from love, for love, and its being is directed toward the 'universal communion' which is the world's destiny. Christians are called 'to read reality in a Trinitarian key' (239). In this Trinitarian key, time is not just 'opportunity', to be translated into cash, growth, or outcomes. Rather, time is the medium of relationship. It is the possibility of communion.

'The divine Persons are subsistent relations, and the world, created according to the divine model, is a web of relationships' (239). Discovering this deep truth of creation is the 'key to our own fulfilment'. Our growth and flourishing is in direct proportion 'to the extent that we enter into relationships, going out from ourselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures'. This is how we express the 'trinitarian dynamism' of our own being.

Pope Francis emphasises the practice of the Sabbath as a critical witness to the priority of time. The Sabbath is a ritual anticipation of the consummation of all creation, a foretaste of 'the final transfiguration' of the world, and so reminds us of time's deepest purpose and meaning. It 'opens our eyes to the larger picture' (193). For time is not subject, in the last analysis, to any utilitarian logic.²⁷ Practices of routinely suspending utilitarian activity are crucial in helping us to experience this. Indeed, for Pope Francis this is the 'first' priority of 'ecological conversion': 'gratitude and gratuitousness, a recognition that the world is God's loving gift' (220). This is why we must 'include in our work a dimension of receptivity and gratuity', reminding ourselves that festivity, celebration and gratitude do not come at the expense of real work, but express its heart (237).

Personally and organisationally, we can be suspicious of contemplative rest as 'something unproductive and unnecessary'. But it underpins 'the very thing which is most important

²⁷ Sachs is right to observe that 'a strong propensity towards anti-utilitarianism is recognisable throughout the encyclical' (op. cit. 11), for there is a 'priority of being over being useful' (69).

about work: its meaning'. It protects 'human action from becoming empty activism.' It saves us from the 'greed' and 'isolation' which afflict us when we lose our sense of time's purpose, its deeper direction (193). Cultivating a deep attentiveness enables us to look more deeply at ourselves and our choices, and above all to sense the Creator, 'who lives among us and surrounds us' and whose presence 'cannot be contrived but only found, uncovered' (25). This is a more important type of progress: 'a decrease in the pace of production and consumption' enables 'another form of progress and development' (191).

The Eucharist, in which the world is offered as a gift of love, is the definitive disclosure of the meaning of time. In the Eucharist, 'fullness is already achieved' (192); time's end is revealed to us. Every Eucharistic altar is 'the altar of the world'; there, 'creation is projected towards divinization, towards the holy wedding feast, towards unification with the Creator himself' (192). This is the destiny of all things, a continual reminder of the real meaning of time.

Living the truth of time's end, its *telos*, generates 'an attitude of the heart' which paradoxically enables us to enter more completely and freely into the present. The contemplative engagement with creation's gratuity establishes a 'serene attentiveness' which allows us to 'be fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next', to 'accept each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full' (226). For 'the 'concrete' God, so to speak, is today.'²⁸ Cultivating the ability to be fully present to others and to creation fosters that 'capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life' (25). It is this which liberates us from that 'unhealthy anxiety' which makes us 'superficial, aggressive and compulsive consumers' (226).

Restoring a contemplative heart to our action restores the true meaning of 'development'. It generates 'a different sort of development': '*development in human responsibility, values and conscience*' (78). It is central to the cultivation of an integral ecology, which requires that we 'take time to recover a serene harmony with creation' (25).

The logic of the technocratic paradigm seems implacable. But Francis insists that we do have freedom in the way we respond: we can 'direct' technological and economic change, putting it at the service of a different kind of progress, a different kind of development (112). This 'cultural revolution' will require the establishment of new habits and practices, at both individual and organisational levels. The next section considers what these might be.

vii. What Does 'Success' Look Like?

a) A Culture of Encounter

Francis has called insistently for 'a culture of encounter'. Exhorting young people to realise such a culture, he memorably told them '*I would like you to be almost obsessed about this*'.²⁹ The discussion so far has given some impression of the theological thinking and orientation that underlies the value on encounter. Time is for communion. Relationship is the reality which best expresses the meaning of time. This is our destination: to dwell together in

²⁸ 'A Big Heart Open to God', interview given to Antonio Spadaro, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 19th September 2013.

²⁹ Homily, World Youth Day, 27th July 2013.

communion. 'The new Jerusalem, the holy city (cf. *Rev* 21:2-4), is the goal towards which all of humanity is moving' (EG 71).

Pope Francis summarises: a 'culture of encounter' means 'not just seeing, but looking; not just hearing, but listening; not just passing people by, but *stopping with them*... allowing yourself to be moved with compassion, to draw near, to touch'.³⁰ Its opposite is the 'culture of indifference', in which others make no real impact on me. I do not take the time to attend to them; I am too busy and absorbed by my own purposes. The Jesuit virtue of 'disponibility' perhaps expresses the spirit of such engagements; one makes oneself totally available, aware that the space before another person is always 'holy ground'.³¹

This shift in our perspective on time would enable us to see relationship as an intrinsic and not merely an instrumental good of development. Development action would be characterised by the cultivation of this value. Signs of its successful cultivation might include: the initiation of relationships as a playing a central role in development programmes; allowing a legitimate role to simply being present to those in need and distress, with no agenda; a commitment to listening and attending to the difficult realities of those we seek to help; faithful accompaniment of persons and communities through time; patient engagement in processes of dialogue and discernment; participation and multilateralism—*Doing-Together*, not just *Doing-To*. Those who are helped are participant subjects and not simply passive objects of development.

b) Processes Over Outcomes

If 'time is greater than space', development action should imagine and pursue creative actions, rather than prioritising the establishment of structures of power. A focus on beginnings and potentials will take precedence over the hasty accumulation of achievements. Surrendering the 'obsession with immediate results', we 'give priority to actions which generate new processes in society' (EG 223). We will be long-termists, recognising that it is not ours to control the story; we act within the story, investing our energies in enlarging the possibilities of change in a positive direction. Accompanying others on their journeys, patiently available to them, we remain open to events and refuse to foreclose on them or their situations.³² Instead we involve ourselves in their problems, seeking solidarity with them, building trust and committing to staying present as a process unfolds. We are ready to hand over the reins to others when the time comes. We sow seeds, and do not demand that we always harvest the crop.

Time is oriented to an end which exceeds the horizons of our sight. We walk forwards in trust, without knowing 'the day or the hour' of that end. There is a need for appropriate forms of control, but this need not come at the expense of an overarching vision of hope and possibility which inspires us to start processes that we cannot unilaterally manage to their conclusion.

³⁰ Homily, 13th September 2016.

³¹ John C. Cavadini and Donald Wallenfang, eds., *Pope Francis and the Event of Encounter* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2018) offers a range of perspectives on Francis' conception of 'encounter'.

³² Cf. EG 222-5. We are to allow the weeds and the wheat to grow up together.

c) Re-appraising Development Methodology

The 'See-Judge-Act' methodology expresses the inductive method and historical consciousness which forms Pope Francis' theology. *Experience* is a key datum for theological thinking, and is in creative exchange with *dogma*. We do not use doctrine to confine and control reality, but allow doctrine to illuminate the experiences of persons and communities, and allow those experiences to shape our interpretation of dogma. This is expressed with Francis' second pastoral principle: 'Realities are more important than ideas.'

The new relationship to time we have explored can be expressed in each step of the methodology.

Take time to really See. To see fully, patiently, without foreclosing human complexity or actual situations, without short-circuiting the pain and discomfort we experience in facing the full reality of persons, communities and situations (19).

Take time to Judge. To judge in light of the real 'goals' of development, its real direction: the ends that are truly being sought. Its goal is God, who is Trinitarian communion. So judging will be dialogical and relational, and will consider the human good in ultimate perspective, i.e. through the lens of 'integral ecology' which gives primacy to the human person as a being oriented towards relationship, and as already embedded in the network of relationships which is creation.

Take time to Act. To act in accordance with time's inner direction, the real direction of 'progress', which is God and creation's good. To act as though relationships are an intrinsic and not merely instrumental good; or even, that they are *the* instrumental good. To act without trying to take control of outcomes, but rather remaining within time, not trying to capture events from above. To act *with* others, not indifferently to them. To act *from* the contemplative centre, not at its expense.

d) Measuring Success Faithfully

Accountability is a basic value of the Gospel. We will be called to account for our use of God's gifts. Our accountability before God and the Gospel supplies us with the imperative to develop measures of success.

There is only one criterion on which we will be judged, one standard to which we are accountable. 'As we prepare to leave this life, we will be judged on the basis of love' (MV 15; cf. GE 95, 97). For 'mercy is the beating heart of the Gospel' (GE 97).

The value of accountability is closely connected to a sense of the preciousness of time, its finitude (cf. GE 108). The time we are given is limited. We do not know how much we have. Unlike money or material resources, we can never make more of it. Pope Francis advises that 'the thought of death' is crucial in saving us from the illusion of being 'masters of time'. He

invites us to repeat these words to ourselves: 'I am not the master of time'. We are 'to ask for the grace of a sense of time'.³³

Accountability must be cashed out in day-to-day, year-to-year assessment of our activity, for we are given precious opportunities to relieve the suffering of others that must not be wasted (cf. GE 108). This is true individually and corporately. But we also need to recognise that some of what is most important cannot be measured. We can develop practices that sustain our vigilance, aware that our notions of 'progress' can be co-opted by logics that are foreign to the Gospel. Personally and collectively, we can cultivate the virtues that nourish the deep honesty required for true accountability: 'prudence, vigilance, loyalty, transparency... courage' (MV 19). If we are answerable for what we do with the time and resources we are given, we can acknowledge the need for measurable outcomes, while recognising that our metrics are pragmatic instruments with real limitations. We commit to quantifying our achievements for the sake of accountability. But we remember that the quantitative can suffocate the qualitative.

In the Gospel, accountability is framed with the metaphor of 'bearing fruit'. Pope Francis describes the culture of encounter as a fruitful culture, for 'every encounter is fruitful'. Encounters really change situations, for 'each encounter returns people and things to their place', the place of their true dignity.³⁴ In the same way, the Gospel describes 'growth' with organic images; the grown of a vine, of an ear of wheat. The bearing of fruit and the growth of a plant are not acts of extrinsic power. Nor are they purely quantitative changes which could be plotted univocally on a graph.³⁵ They are acts of the realisation of an inner and intrinsic potential which unfolds gradually through patient cultivation and nurture. This can guide our sense of appropriate accountability. We are to make things grow, and the way we will tell if we have succeeded is that fruit will be borne, fruit which nourishes creatures and contains seeds to continue and expand life. The kind of fruit we are to bear is 'fruit that will last'; not quick fixes, but enduring enrichment of the lives of others.

Accountability is not a threat. For Christians, the ultimate horizon of our failures and successes is the divine mercy and the infinite patience of God (MV 21).³⁶ It is part of our dignity as free and responsible beings that we answer for what we have done and not done, a responsibility we assume with sobriety but without fear, for 'God's forgiveness knows no bounds' (MV 21).

³³ Homily, 1st February 2018.

³⁴ Homily, 13th September 2016.

³⁵ Cf. Wolfgang Sachs, who comments on the flattening effect of univocal measures of development. 'Numbers have an enormously homogenising effect: all the diversity and difference in the world boils down into a scale of numbers'. Op. cit., 6.

³⁶ MV21 illuminates a theological framework for accountability. '[A]nyone who makes a mistake must pay the price. However, this is just the beginning of conversion, not its end, because one begins to feel the tenderness and mercy of God. God does not deny justice. He rather envelopes it and surpasses it with an even greater event in which we experience love as the foundation of true justice. ... God's justice is his mercy given to everyone... the Cross of Christ is God's judgement on all of us and on the whole world, because through it he offers us the certitude of love and new life.'

viii. Organisational Conversion: Giving Priority to Time

We can develop practices at the organisational level that help us to relate to our measures of success healthfully, without surrendering to a utilitarianism that would diminish our sense of the real meaning of time. A joint discernment of organisational practices can equip us to resist the technocratic logic of power and control in achieving our proximate goals and using metrics to assess our movement towards those goals. The following considerations are offered as tentative trajectories that naturally emerge from the discussion so far.

a) Contemplative

The Sabbath is the ever-renewed divine invitation to return to God and God's purposes. This gives meaning to our work (237). It cultivates the contemplative well of true action, action which springs from that 'deep attentiveness' in which we are able to 'wonder about the purpose and meaning of everything', and so hear the 'words of love' which call us to a 'universal communion'.

This 'spirit of Sabbath' is not just Sunday observance, but the manner in which our work altogether is conducted. It enables us to resist the pressure towards 'rapidification', and the acquisitive, frenetic and anxious habits it inculcates. Groups at various levels within the organisation can seek appropriate ways to re-connect with the contemplative well of action, jointly discerning practices that keep them in touch with the real meaning of time. In a Catholic organisation, this may involve giving new centrality to sacramental and liturgical celebrations, putting them at the heart of the organisation's work and identity. A focus on inclusivity will be important in an organisation which welcomes people of different faith commitments as employees and partners, without compromising on its Catholicity.

b) Relational

Being reminded of the meaning of time, we can keep relationship at the heart of our purpose. This value can guide, sustain and motivate our work. An organisation which remembers the meaning of time will be one which fosters a culture of encounter. The Sabbath is marked by the Eucharist: it is the remembrance of our destiny, which is communion. It shows us what time is 'for'. In this way it expresses the real goal of our efforts and activities as a development organisation: the cultivation of an integral ecology, which fosters the true dignity of persons and of creation, a dignity founded in our vocation to universal communion. This will be expressed in the prioritisation of relationship, within the organisation, with the organisation's partners and with those whom it serves, for relationship is the ultimate good of persons, and of creation itself. Integral ecology expresses the flourishing of the three intertwined relationships which constitute us as human beings: with God; with one another; and with the earth (66).

In this connection, special mention can perhaps be made of responsible use of communication and information technologies. 'Superficial information, instant communication and virtual reality' make us 'indifferent to the suffering flesh of our brothers and sisters' (GE 108). These technologies sweep us into a constant 'whirlwind of activity', 'anxious to have it all now' and unable to feel and show any real concern for those in need.

We need to ask whether our use of these technologies in our professional lives is contributing to the fragmentation and distraction which makes it harder for us to hear and respond to others, feeding not a culture of encounter but a culture of indifference. Poor use of technology fuel the ‘hedonism and consumerism’ which ‘can prove our downfall’. Cultivating ‘a certain simplicity of life’ may involve a critical scrutiny of our use of particular technologies, especially information and communication devices.

c) Present

Some organisational structures and processes may promote the value of relationship as an intrinsic good; others may diminish it. This can be jointly discerned over time. The intrinsic good of relationship may be expressed in a re-examination of what it is to ‘help’ people. For example, as well as providing material aid, we can try really to attend to those we work with, at home or in the field. Accompaniment can be seen as a legitimate goal of development work, not simply a means to an end. Our programmes can include a commitment to ‘stop with’ people; to look, and not just see; to listen, and not just hear.³⁷ Creating spaces simply to be present to others in their pain, we are challenged to be faithful to them through time, even when we cannot fix the situation (19).

d) Long-termist

Long-termism expresses the priority of time. Resisting the temptation to rush frantically through tasks and projects, we can habituate ourselves to a different paradigm. Knowing that time is greater than space, we can focus on beginning processes that will bear fruit in the future. We can ask realistically how long it will take before the real ‘achievements’ of a project are visible. This may include adopting inter-generational perspectives, for salvation history extends from our ancestors to our children’s children. This need not be long-termism regarding the length of a specific project, but can inform the timescale in which we measure a project’s ‘success’ (78; 181).

ix. Conclusion

This paper has presented some perspectives on the changed relationship to time which Pope Francis calls for. It has invited us to consider ‘what time is for’ in order to distinguish between authentic and inauthentic progress, exploring Francis’ invitation to give priority to time. It has described the dangers of the ‘technocratic paradigm’, which makes us consumerists of time, and identified a temptation to prefer space to time, power and outcome to process. It has pointed to time as gift, not as possession. It has proposed that communion is the true end of time, and that this is the reference point for walking an authentic path, the path of that ‘other kind of progress’ Francis calls for. We express the priority of time by valuing relationship, presence, process, beginnings and potentials, dialogue, long-termism, multilateralism,

³⁷ John Paul II stressed the importance to attending to persons at the level of ‘being’, not just at the level of ‘having’. Benedict XVI foregrounds this in connection with development work in *Caritatis in Veritate*, where he emphasises the need to give not just material resources but also time, training, respect and attention to those receiving aid, lest they remain subordinate to aid-givers in a kind of dependence (47).

participation and contemplation. These values are at some angle to the 'rapidified' world in which we necessarily have to work.

There may be a concern that these values undermine the urgency of practically aiding those in need. This would be a misunderstanding of the Catholic Social Teaching tradition, which underlines the exigency of our present responsibilities by throwing upon them the light of eternity. '*Laudato Si'*'s energetic exposition of the eternal is what enables its production of urgency in the present.'³⁸ Time is a gift whose teleology is love. Understanding this makes our responsibility graver, and motivates us to waste no opportunity (GE 108). Better to take risks, make mistakes and get hurt than stay on the sidelines, clean and safe. We must 'go forth' without delay (EG 49).

Charitable organisations, which often use resources which have been generously given to them by others, have a special vocation to responsible use of what they are given. Developing measures of success is critical in maintaining that responsibility. Considering this, the report has attempted to show how the awareness of time's purpose and goal can help us to direct our activity truthfully and responsibly.

Walking in hope toward creation's true end, we see the time we are given as a precious chance to contribute to the realisation of that goal: universal communion. At the same time, we know that the world and time itself are gifts 'from the outstretched hand of the Father of all'. So we cultivate wonder, and we do not forget to celebrate. We 'sing as we go'. 'Our struggles and our concern' do not 'take away the joy of our hope'. Asking for 'the grace of a sense of time', we work without anxiety, but with determination to give our all in the time we have.

x. Afterword: Going Forward

a) Scope of the paper

This report has aimed to select, synthesise and re-narrate Pope Francis' theological approach to the concepts of time and success, as expressed in his 2015 encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*. It has interpreted *Laudato Si'* in light of Francis' magisterium as a whole, his intellectual influences, and the Catholic social tradition in which he stands.

Acknowledging that any act of selection and interpretation is creative and constructive to a considerable degree, the report has nevertheless not sought to introduce new ideas or agendas. It has sought only the faithful exposition of a theological vision. Neither has it attempted to generate specific indicators of success. Instead it has proposed a theological framework for the development of such indicators. As part of this process, it has indicated what kind of criteria might inform 'measures of success' if they are to be reflective of the priorities and values expressed in *Laudato Si'*.

³⁸ Clare Monagle, op. cit., 9.

Importantly, the report has not tried to assess what Catholic development organisations are currently doing, nor is there any implication that much of what is described does not already reflect those organisations' own practice. Review and assessment of current practice, and application of the findings of the paper, are for practitioners to take forward.

b) Recommendations

While the report has not pursued an explicitly critical or constructive reception of Francis' magisterium, it does reveal that Francis' thinking, while strong in some areas, is less developed in others. In taking this process forward, a more detailed examination of these 'thinner' areas can be foci for further investigation. These include:

- i. An integration of the theological rationale for *accountability* with the non-utilitarian emphasis of *Laudato Si's* vision;
- ii. A clear theological justification for *metrics* of 'success', including a valuation of specifically numerical measures;
- iii. A theological account of the urgency of concrete change, to balance the Franciscan critique of the 'two modern dogmas' of pragmatism and efficiency.

Laudato Si's vision of 'true progress' presents considerable practical challenges for development organisations. Concrete application of this vision is particularly difficult within a target-focused professional culture with a strong emphasis on compliance. Francis speaks to this challenge when he stresses the time and patience needed for the discernment of authentic change. He foregrounds dialogue, inclusive conversation, openness, and mutual listening. This report therefore functions not as a 'finished' piece of research, but rather as a contribution to the organisation's ongoing discernment of its vocation: to be an agent of the Church's transforming mission to every creature.